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4-H CLUB TOURS PROVE THAT SEEING IS BELIEVING

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A radio talk by Anna Stokes, 4-H club girl, Bergen County, New Jersey, delivered in the National 4-H club radio program September 1, 1934, and broadcast by a network of 58 associate NBC radio stations.

U. S. Department of Agriculture

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We have just completed our third 4-H garden competition with a tour last Saturday of the six best gardens marking the high spot of the summer's work. Organized to give us something interesting and useful to do during vacation, this summer project has been of financial aid to our families. It may be surprising to many of you that a suburban county just across the Hudson River from New York City would find 4-H club girls interested in having gardens, but I guess girls are the same all over and enjoy taking part in a competition. That seems to have been true in our case; girls from thirteen different communities having taken part.

The rules are simple. All gardens must be 144 square feet, must contain at least three vegetables, and may have not more than one fourth of its area planted in flowers. Gardening information is provided each member. To maintain interest and to give help, each garden is visited twice during the summer by the home demonstration agent and three judges who grade the gardens according to quality, quantity and attractiveness. Then, on the last Saturday in August, all garden club members are invited to go on a tour visiting the six best gardens and ending the day with a picnic at the last garden.

These tours are a big help to the beginning gardener. This opportunity of visiting the best gardens showed the girls just how it was being done, set a goal for the beginners and gave even the more successful gardeners tips for their own gardens for another year.

The first year of the contest I was lucky enough to win first place and my sister got second place. Last year my sister placed first and I finished second. Each year the judges say it is harder to select the best six. Many girls work under very adverse conditions, attempting to wrest a garden from field soil that has never before been worked or that for other reasons is undesirable. The improvement in three years' time shows the value of perseverance.

So that everyone may receive some reward for her efforts, each girl is awarded a certificate of recognition and a plant for her home, local garden clubs having been most generous in their contributions of plants.

The six best gardens receive certificates with blue ribbons; the next few the same type of certificate with red ribbons; the best, yellow ribbons; and the others, green ribbons. So that the judging may be as fair as possible, two sets of certificates are awarded--one set for first year girls and another for the more experienced gardeners.

The garden tours have taught more than gardening. They have set up in the minds of the girls certain standards of home attractiveness which they have applied to their own homes through tidying the yard, planting flowers and making the outside of the home generally attractive.

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Not only have I enjoyed my garden but I have found it decidedly worth while from an economic viewpoint, having canned from my 12 by 12 garden sixty quarts of vegetables. Those of us who had done some canning showed our achievements when the tour visited our gardens, with the result that more girls are interested. Two weeks ago, the winner of the first prize for canning at the Chicago World's Fair last year, who is the mother of one of our 4-H garden members, gave a canning demonstration for us.

Most of our gardens are devoted to vegetables because of the help they give to the family table. One member's parents said they didn't know what they would have done without their daughter's garden and the encouragement it gave them to make their first attempt. Yet we love flowers and plant them, too. Last year, at the close of the garden tour, we were given a demonstration teaching us principles of flower arrangements for home decoration. This year we brought our own flowers on the tour and made arrangements as artistically as we could for the judges to criticize. We decidedly feel that we have learned a great deal from these two experiences. Last year and this year, Bergen County 4-H club girls were made responsible for the flower arrangement of the 4-H club exhibit at the Trenton Fair.

We enjoy our garden work and agree with one mother who said, "You are receiving, while you are still young, free instruction that many of us older people have paid good money for."

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